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Ad Hoc Working Group on Trade Efficiency
First session
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Item 2 of the provisional agenda

PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

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II - ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Item 1: Election of officers

In accordance with past practice in UNCTAD, it is proposed that the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Working Group consist of 7 members (a Chairman, 5 Vice-chairmen and a Rapporteur), to be elected among the core membership[1] in accordance with the following geographical distribution: 4 from lists A and C combined, 2 from list B and 1 from list D.

Item 2: Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

The provisional agenda in section I follows the format agreed upon at the consultations of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on 17 July 1992.

The technical nature of the work expected from the Working Group, as well as the short time available to prepare for the 1994 Symposium on Trade Efficiency, point to the following needs: (1) the Group should start its actual work as early as possible; (2) before deciding on the organization of its future work, the Group should receive as much information as possible on the issues to be addressed, and participants should be given the possibility to exchange as much as possible of the experience they have already had in areas related to trade efficiency; and (3) experts should provide additional inputs on the various aspects of the Group's terms of reference before it holds its second session. It is with these elements in mind that the above provisional agenda is proposed. A more detailed description of the topics to be covered by the Group is given in the secretariat note submitted under item 3 (TD/B/WG.2/2).

Item 3: Establishment of the work programme of the Working Group

With a view to assisting the Working Group in establishing its work programme, the secretariat has prepared a note entitled "Establishment of the work programme of the Working Group: issues and timetable" (TD/B/WG.2/2).

Considering the specificities of the Ad Hoc Working group on Trade Efficiency (see above), the Group may find it useful to receive basic information about the 'state of play' in the different areas of its competence. Six areas have been earmarked for an initial exchange of information and experience, namely:

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[1] In paragraph 77 of the Cartagena Commitment, the Conference specified that *"... the core membership of these working groups will comprise all interested countries, which will nominate the relevant national experts. Other countries may participate in an observer capacity."*

(a) Information and trade: Attention is drawn to paragraph 5 of the Group's terms of reference (TD/B(XXXVIII/Misc.5), which states that (the Group) "should provide a forum for the exchange of experiences among member States so as to enable them to draw appropriate lessons for the formulation and implementation of policies at the national and international levels and for international economic cooperation". Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the same terms of reference refer to the Working Group's responsibility in examining "how modern organization and technology can be used to foster greater participation in international trade, in particular by small and medium-sized enterprises", and in contributing "to the utilization of market opportunities by fostering transparency in trade-related information flows, including by increasing international awareness of opportunities to access publicly available market information". Attention is also drawn to paragraph 9 of the terms of reference ("The work of the Working Group should complement that of other international bodies while seeking to ensure that no duplication occurs, notably regarding the work of the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/GATT").

(b) EDI and trade efficiency: As mentioned in paragraph 5 of the terms of reference (see above), the Group should stimulate "exchange of experiences among member States". Paragraphs 1 (c) and 1 (d) of the terms of reference request the Group to "promote greater understanding and use of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), including the standards established through UNECE WP4" and to "evaluate the impact of EDI-related developments and relevant technical and technological innovations on the trade efficiency of firms, and the potential participation of new players in the international trade". Attention is again drawn to paragraph 9 of the terms of reference regarding complementarity between the work of the Group and that of UNECE WP4.

(c) Solutions for efficient trade: Keeping in mind paragraph 5 of the terms of reference (the Group should stimulate "exchange of experiences among member States"), attention is drawn to paragraph 1(a) of the same text (the Group should "identify possibilities to reduce transactional costs in international trade, particularly through trade facilitation and the simplification of trade procedures").

(d) Trade Points: Paragraphs 1(b) and 3 of the Group's terms of reference request it to promote, as appropriate, the development and establishment of Trade Points, and to "identify areas in which technical cooperation could be necessary in trade efficiency-related areas, with special regard to trade facilitation activities and the establishment of Trade Points, and possibilities to create new trade links thereby".

(e) 1994 Symposium: Paragraph 4 of the Group's terms of reference states that "the Working Group shall prepare the 1994 international symposium on trade efficiency, as called for in paragraphs 157 and 158 of the Cartagena Commitment".

(f) Establishment of the work programme for future sessions of the Group: As mentioned above, the nature and specific responsibilities of this Working Group suggest that the Group should adopt original methods of work and innovative approaches. Attention is drawn to paragraph 10 of the terms of reference of the Working Group, which states that "the Working Group may recommend for the consideration of the Board the establishment of expert groups".

Item 4: Provisional agenda for the second session of the Working Group

A draft provisional agenda for the second session of the Working Group will be submitted for consideration in the light of the decisions of the Working Group.

Item 5: Other business

Item 6: Adoption of the report of the Working Group to the Board

Paragraph 11 of the Group's terms of reference states that the Working Group "may submit interim reports and shall submit a final report on the results of its work to the Trade and Development Board".